

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 001342

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR, EUR/SCE, EUR/BI AND S/WCI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 6/12/13

TAGS: [KAWC](#) [PREL](#) [BH](#) [HR](#) [UN](#) [UNSC](#)

SUBJECT: CROATIA/ICTY: PIFWC ANTE GOTOVINA GOES PUBLIC

Classified By: Poloff Robert Silberstein, reasons 1.5(b) and (d)

[11](#). (U) In an undated interview published June 10, ICTY fugitive PIFWC Ante Gotovina reportedly told Ivo Pukanic, editor of Croatian newsmagazine "Nacional," that he acknowledged the authority of the Hague Tribunal. Gotovina said that he was willing to surrender to the ICTY on the condition that the indictment against him is suspended and he is given the opportunity to be interviewed as a suspect by ICTY investigators in Zagreb. Should the OTP then decide that an indictment is warranted, Gotovina claimed that he would surrender quietly to The Hague.

[12](#). (SBU) In the interview, Gotovina criticized Croatia's former HDZ government, saying that it failed to inform him of OTP requests to interview him as a suspect in 1998. He was milder in his critique of the current coalition government, but said it too let him down as it failed to communicate with him at all after coming to power in 2000. In what can only be termed revisionist history, Gotovina characterized himself as a "victim of political manipulation" from both the right and the left. (Note: in early 2001, Gotovina was one of 12 retired and active-duty generals who published an open letter harshly attacking the Racan Government for its decision to order the arrest of Croatian Army General Mirko Norac for war crimes committed in the town of Gospic in 1991. Norac was convicted in 2003.) Gotovina extended an olive branch to President Mesic, saying that he deplored an incident at a military barracks in Split in May 2001 when members of the local guards brigade openly cursed Mesic during the President's visit.

[13](#). (U) Prime Minister Racan, President Mesic and Deputy Prime Minister Goran Granic (day-to-day manager of the GOC's relationship with ICTY) reiterated that Gotovina had no choice but to appear in The Hague as an indictee. Racan offered Gotovina the GOC's full support in mounting a legal defense once the PIFWC surrendered.

Ready to surrender?

[14](#). (C) ICTY Zagreb ResRep Thomas Osorio told us June 11 that he believed the Gotovina interview was authentic and very encouraging. He interprets the interview as a clear sign that recent stepped-up SFOR pressure in Bosnia (tightened border controls, sweeps of areas in which Gotovina was suspected of taking shelter, detention of suspected collaborators) is having the desired psychological effect on Gotovina. So too is pressure from the international community; Osorio speculated that Gotovina appears to be coming to the conclusion that even if the HDZ returns to power he would have to remain a fugitive as any Croatian Government would be compelled to transfer him to the ICTY. Therefore, Gotovina may have decided to take the plunge and open what are in effect negotiations with the ICTY -- with the press, the GOC and the Office of the President as intermediaries -- on the modalities of an eventual surrender.

[15](#). (C) Osorio said the ICTY will not entertain Gotovina's demand that the indictment against him be dropped or suspended, even temporarily. However, once he surrenders, the OTP can proffer "face saving" options. These included launching a complete indictment review, in which Gotovina and his legal team could participate, and rewording or dropping elements of the indictment.

[16](#). (C) Separately, Osorio's deputy told us that they have received no indication that the Croatian police have developed new leads on Gotovina's whereabouts. In a statement to police on June 10, "Nacional" editor Pukanic refused to disclose any details about where or when the interview was conducted, other than to say that it was outside Croatia and that there were other "witnesses" present.

Comment

[17](#). (C) Whatever his motivations for giving an interview -- SFOR and IC pressure, a falling out with his right-wing abettors or ennui of life as a fugitive -- Gotovina, by

acknowledging ICTY's jurisdiction, has embarrassed Croatia's political right, which had made him the poster boy of opposition to ICTY cooperation. The GOC and President Mesic

already have begun to make political hay of the interview, hinting that had the HDZ facilitated Gotovina's interview as a suspect in 1998, ICTY might have decided not to indict him.

ROSSIN

NNNN